

527

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POLAND: Demonstrations

The clashes yesterday between police and solidarity supporters appear to be the largest since early May.

Police used tear gas, water cannons, flares, and percussion grenades to disperse protesters in Warsaw and at least 10 other major cities. The crowds ranged from several hundred in Lublin to perhaps 15,000 in Warsaw. Altogether, more than 35,000 people may have been involved in the demonstrations.

The groups were made up mostly of students and younger workers. Disorders in Warsaw, Gdansk, and near Krakow continued late into the night as demonstrators repeatedly regrouped after being dispersed by riot police.

Near midnight Polish officials claimed order had been restored in most areas. Crews were dispatched to clean up the debris in Warsaw. Curfews were imposed in Wroclaw--a militant stronghold--and several other cities.

The regime relied mainly on special motorized riot police to break up the demonstrations, but an unusually large number of regular military, as well as regular and auxiliary police, were held in reserve. The security forces reportedly showed little restraint in clashes with the protesters. Initial Polish press reports claim both sides suffered casualties, and several hundred protesters were arrested.

Comment: The demonstrations probably were larger than the government expected. The authorities clearly hoped that their massive show of force and warnings of the past few days would intimidate potential demonstrators. Security personnel probably will remain in a high state of readiness out of concern that demonstrations will continue over the next several days, as they did in several cities in May.

Many union activists apparently were not intimidated and may again take to the streets. Most demonstrators, however, probably believe they have made their point and will lie low.

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